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CEP BRIEF: ISRAEL RESPONDS TO HOUTHI DRONE STRIKE AGAINST TEL AVIV

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Media at CEP
media@counterextremism.com

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(New York, N.Y.) — Israel carried out airstrikes today against the Houthi-controlled Al-Hudaydah port in Yemen, which is used by the Iran-backed Houthis as an entry point for the smuggling of IRGC-supplied weapons. The airstrikes, which targeted gas and oil depots as well as a power station, were a direct response to hundreds of strikes by the Houthis against Israel, which yesterday culminated in a drone strike in Tel Aviv that killed one and injured ten others.

Counter Extremism Project (CEP) Senior Advisor and former UK Ambassador to Yemen Edmund Fitton-Brown said:

“This really is Israel showing the way in dealing with unprovoked Houthi aggression. Hitherto, the US, UK and other like-minded partners have been too cautious in imposing a cost on the Houthis. They were right to take on the mission but failed to escalate when it became clear that they had neither deterred nor incapacitated the terrorists.

I use the word terrorist advisedly. This is not a government and the quarrel is not with Yemen, which still has an internationally recognized government administering the majority of Yemeni territory.

Referring to the Chapter VII (legally enforceable) United Nations Security Council Resolution 2624 of 2022, which condemned the Houthis as a terrorist group, the international community must now use whatever force is necessary to compel them to back down.

The US should no more hesitate to take kinetic action against the Houthi terrorist leadership inside Yemen than it did to take out successive leaders of Al-Qaida and ISIS over the past two decades.”

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200 missiles and drones at Israel and targeted over 70 vessels since Hamas's war against Israel began, forcing huge shipping costs and delays as hundreds of ships have been forced to re-route around southern Africa.

CEP Non-resident fellow and Yemen expert Ari Heistein:

"Israel has waited 9 months, but eventually it had no choice but to strike the Houthis after it became apparent that no other country, neither America nor the UK nor China, would resolve the Houthi threat.

In carrying out any further strikes, Israel should target the organization's leadership —those who areterrorizing Yemenis, maritime commerce in the Red Sea, and innocent civilians throughout the region. To the extent that it's possible, strikes should avoid placing the Houthis in the position of "defending"Yemen – in reality, they are extremists who have destroyed the country."

The Houthis have vowed that their aggression against Israel and in the Red Sea is in support of freedom forGazans, but their own appalling human rights record gives the lie to that claim. Commenting on today's strike, Israeli officials have pointed out that it has withstood Houthi aggression for nearly a year, but that the killing of an Israeli citizen forced an escalation. It's decision to contain the strike to very specific targets within Yemen—targets that are essential to the flow of arms from the Iranian regime to its Houthi proxies—was calibrated to contain the conflict at a time when Israel is already fighting a war against Hamas and exchanging with fire from Hezbollah along its Lebanese border.

Heistein noted:

"The pictures of massive fires engulfing Houthi-controlled energy installations may have been the Israeli government beating the Houthis at their own game. The Houthis constantly seek to create "images of victory" that they then circulate on social media to convince their public and the rest of the world that they are unstoppable. Pictures from the Israeli strike today make the Houthis look weak and defenseless, especially when compared with the small-scale damage caused by the Houthi strike against Tel Aviv."

To read CEP's resource on the Houthis, click here.

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